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FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT BY

**MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT P. FRENCH
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL – ARMY
PENNSYLVANIA NATIONAL GUARD**

BEFORE THE

**MANAGEMENT, INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT
SUBCOMMITTEE OF HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE**

FIRST SESSION, 110TH CONGRESS

ON

**“Examining the Impact of Equipment Shortages
On the National Guard’s Readiness for
Homeland Security Missions”**

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**NOT FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

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Chairman Thomas, Chairman Carney, ranking member Rogers and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the impacts of equipment shortages on the National Guard's readiness to respond to homeland security missions. I am appearing on behalf of Pennsylvania's Adjutant General, Major General Jessica L. Wright, who regrets that she was unable to be here today. General Wright asked me to convey her thanks to you and the subcommittee for undertaking this inquiry into this important subject. General Blum has given you a national perspective on these issues, and I will focus on the impacts on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Army and Air National Guard.

The National Guard is the only military force shared by the states and the federal government. The soldiers and airmen of Pennsylvania Army and Air National Guard perform vital missions abroad as members of reserve components of the Army and the Air Force. At home, the Guard functions as the modern militia responding to the Governor in times of domestic emergencies. Except when performing active federal service under the direction of the President, the Guard remains a state military force under the command and control of the Governor. The National Guard is rightly called America's home team, and I can tell you that our Governor, Ed Rendell, takes great pride in his role as commander-in-chief of the Pennsylvania National Guard when it is not in active federal service.

In recent years, the Pennsylvania National Guard has experienced an unprecedented operations tempo performing active federal service in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia Kosovo, and elsewhere around the globe. Since September 11, 2001, we estimate that more than 16,000 of the over 19,000 men and women who serve in the Pennsylvania National Guard have been deployed in an active federal status in support of the Global War on Terrorism. The duration and location of these deployments have varied, but we have had major combat units deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan for tours of up to 12 months on the ground plus six months training in mobilized status. In September 2005, we had more than 6,000 Pennsylvania National Guard soldiers and airmen on active duty under Titles 10 and 32, United States Code. Today, the number of mobilized and deployed soldiers and airmen is smaller, with about 650 in an active federal service status. These numbers are expected to grow in the future. I mention these deployments because of their potential impacts on homeland security responsibilities.

Pennsylvania is fortunate to have one of the largest National Guard forces in the United States, and we have been able to respond effectively to domestic emergencies even as large

numbers of our personnel and their equipment have been deployed overseas. For example, in September 2005, at a time when over 2,000 soldiers from our 2nd Brigade Combat Team were deployed to Al-Anbar province in Iraq, we were about to deploy nearly 2,500 soldiers and airmen to Louisiana in response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster. I believe Pennsylvania deployed the largest Guard force to the Gulf Coast of any state except for those in the direct path of the storm's devastation. This response was accomplished under the auspices of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which has proven an effective tool for the states to work together to respond to domestic emergencies, with coordination from the National Guard Bureau.

Even though I believe the Pennsylvania National Guard has responded effectively in the past to various homeland security and domestic emergency contingencies, I must tell you that the senior leadership of the Pennsylvania National Guard has concerns about our equipment readiness to respond to an emergency or homeland security contingency of extended duration or widespread impact. For example, in June 2006, the Pennsylvania National Guard responded magnificently to the flooding in Northeast Pennsylvania. Our Army National Guard helicopters participated in nearly 1,000 water rescues, and who can forget the photographs of people being lifted up from the roofs of their homes or from vehicles stranded in the on-rushing waters of the floods. Our worry is what would happen if an even more widespread emergency arose at a time when the Army National Guard's helicopters were deployed overseas.

The same aircrews that rescued Pennsylvanians from the floods were earlier deployed to Afghanistan. Aircraft that these aircrews flew in Afghanistan were left in country and replaced with other airframes. What if our Governor and our Commonwealth lacked the military assets to respond? Even though the Emergency Management Assistance Compact means that assets from our neighboring states could be made available, it's unlikely they could be on scene as quickly. Interstate movement of personnel and equipment in response to an EMAC scenario will rarely, if ever, result in as prompt a response as use of in-state assets. The bottom line is that equipment shortages in the Guard result in slower response time than if the Guard were fully equipped. These concerns are shared by many states.

In terms of equipment, Pennsylvania again is fortunate in that the Pennsylvania Army National Guard was the only state National Guard force – and indeed the only reserve component force in America – selected for fielding of the new Stryker Brigade Combat Team. This means that, as part of its transformation, our 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team is getting the latest equipment. Even so, our Army National Guard faces significant equipment shortages in categories of equipment that might be vital in response to homeland security and domestic emergency scenarios.

Pennsylvania has only about 50% of its authorized numbers of truck tractors and flatbed trailers. We have only about 45% of our authorized number of Bradley Fighting Vehicles. Our soldiers have only 32% of night vision equipment and 69% of small arms and crew-served weapons on hand. We have only 48% of the authorized number of fuel tankers for our force.

For equipment identified for use in performing homeland security and disaster relief, the Pennsylvania Army National Guard is currently equipped at **44.5%** of its requirement for aviation, chemical, engineer, logistical, maintenance, transportation, medical, signal and security equipment. Of the equipment identified by line item number for homeland security/emergency response needs, **48.8%** are considered critical dual use equipment items. Our goal is to fill 100% of the 342 critical dual use items as “key enablers.”

Also of concern is the age and condition of our equipment. It is a common occurrence for the driver of a National Guard truck or the pilot of a National Guard aircraft to be younger – sometimes significantly younger – than the equipment he or she is operating. Nearly all our 2.5-ton (deuce and a half) and five-ton trucks are 35 to 40 years old. Our heavier trucks average 20 to 25 years of age.

Let me make one point clear, when our soldiers and airmen deploy to combat, they are provided the best-available up-to-date equipment. Superbly trained and equipped, our deployed Guard soldiers and airmen are ready for battle. However, it would be far better if our units had that same equipment at home, not just to enhance training, but also to increase readiness for the homeland security and emergency preparedness missions.

We don't just need equipment to respond effectively in domestic emergencies; we need the facilities from which to mount our response. The ability to respond effectively to homeland security and emergency scenarios is almost always one that requires a joint response involving both military and non-military government organizations. Governor Ed Rendell, with outstanding support from our Congressional delegation, has advanced a plan so that Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base can function as a joint interagency base and homeland security hub after the Navy leaves the installation. While Navy and Marine units will leave Willow Grove as a result of BRAC, Pennsylvania Air and Army National Guard units, along with the Army Reserve, plan to operate there well into the future. Flight operations are an absolutely essential element of any disaster relief effort facilitating rapid response and recovery in emergency situations. The joint interagency base approach will provide for an installation in a key strategic location with DoD-level security for units and agencies that can respond to a wide variety of scenarios. This represents an innovative approach to provide homeland security response capabilities, and we believe Willow Grove will become a model homeland security installation.

Permit me also to mention an Air Guard equipment issue of importance. The 193rd Special Operations Wing is converting to eight new EC-130J aircraft replacing older EC-130Es. The DoD had planned to outfit six of the new aircraft with special mission equipment to conduct the unit's one-of-a-kind "Commando Solo" mission - airborne broadcast of multimedia programs in support of information operations. The 193rd is the only organization in the DoD that conducts this important tasking. Its C-130s could play a major role in disaster response scenarios. To date, only three of the required six aircraft have been modified to perform the mission, and we have learned that DoD does not plan to fund Commando Solo equipment for the final three aircraft.

General Blum has told you about Department of Defense action to address the equipment needs in the National Guard, and this is certainly a positive development. As long as the Guard is competing with the active forces for available funds and equipment, and as long as homeland security and emergency preparedness are viewed as secondary concerns, the Guard will have difficulties in obtaining the numbers, quality and types of equipment we need to best respond to emergencies. We don't know what kind of contingencies or emergencies may develop in the future. We do know that the current lack of equipment on hand could degrade our ability to respond in certain catastrophic scenarios. We also do know that the National Response Plan and state emergency response scenarios give the National Guard an important role to play in addressing various emergency support functions.

As we have in the past, the Pennsylvania National Guard stands ready to perform both its war-fighting and homeland security missions. We need the same commitment to equipping our units for homeland security and emergency response missions that we have when we send our units on war-fighting missions overseas.

Thank you again for looking into this very significant issue.